United Nations A/58/220

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 August 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Item 131 of the provisional agenda*
Joint Inspection Unit

Implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolutions 32/199 of 21 December 1977, 37/124 of 17 December 1982, 44/184 of 19 December 1989 and 48/221 of 23 December 1993. It contains information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in three reports of the Joint Inspection Unit, on Strengthening the United Nations system capacity for conflict prevention (A/50/853); sharing responsibilities in peacekeeping: the United Nations and regional organizations (A/50/571); and travel in the United Nations: issues of efficiency and cost savings (A/50/692).

The report shows that the Secretary-General and executive heads of organizations of the United Nations system continue to give priority to implementation of the approved recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit. Furthermore, where the reports of the Unit have been considered under other agenda items without specific reference made to the recommendations contained in them, the Secretary-General has proceeded to implement those recommendations which would result in improvements in the management of the resources and operations of the United Nations system. In all the cases under review there have been significant developments since the issuance and consideration of the Unit's reports by the various legislative bodies.

* A/58/150.

** The present report is being submitted after the deadline owing to the need for extensive consultation with the various departments and offices that contributed to its contents.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to a series of long-standing resolutions of the General Assembly in which the Assembly has requested the Secretary-General to submit to it an annual report on the implementation of the major recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). In subparagraph (d) of its decision of 20 November 1975, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to give priority to the implementation of the recommendations of the Unit approved by legislative bodies and to provide adequate information thereon in his annual reports. The Assembly reiterated that request in its resolutions 32/199 of 21 December 1977, 37/124 of 17 December 1982, 39/242 of 18 December 1984 and 48/221 of 23 December 1993.

2. The Secretary-General's report was intended to complement the efforts of JIU as stipulated in General Assembly resolutions 42/218 of 21 December 1987, 44/184 of 19 December 1989, 45/237 of 21 December 1990, 48/221 and 54/16 of 29 October 1999, in which the Assembly requested the Unit to include in its annual report a section on its findings regarding the implementation of its recommendations and to coordinate its efforts with the Secretariat in order to submit to the Assembly the maximum possible information on the implementation of the Unit's recommendations.

3. As a large number of JIU recommendations are addressed to the legislative bodies and executive heads of various organizations of the United Nations system for action, the process of compiling a review of the status of implementation of recommendations contained in the reports becomes unavoidable and necessitates system-wide updates on the implementation of each recommendation relevant to the respective organizations of the system. Consequently, some organizations continue to question the rationale for reporting to the General Assembly on the implementation of those recommendations pertaining to their organizations.

4. In its report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session,[1] the Joint Inspection Unit proposed a detailed follow-up system in which the Unit would include in its report information and analysis on the implementation of its recommendations and their impact. The Assembly endorsed that proposal in its resolution 54/16.

5. In view of those developments, the continued preparation of the report by the Secretary-General, in addition to the ongoing efforts of JIU in reporting on the implementation of its recommendations through its own follow-up mechanism, is likely to create duplication, as the reports include essentially similar information. It is therefore necessary to streamline and simplify the process and to consolidate all reporting within the framework of the Unit's follow-up mechanism. That would eliminate wasteful and duplicative efforts by reducing the number of overlapping reports and introducing a more systematic approach to monitoring and reporting on the implementation of JIU recommendations while at the same time providing Member States with comprehensive and timely information.

6. The organizations of the United Nations system report to their respective legislative bodies on follow-up to the recommendations of JIU on the basis of their respective decisions. Accordingly, the present report addresses only the comments by the United Nations and its funds and programmes on follow-up to the JIU reports on strengthening the United Nations system capacity for conflict prevention

(A/50/853); sharing responsibilities in peacekeeping: the United Nations and regional organizations (A/50/571); and travel in the United Nations: issues of efficiency and cost savings (A/50/692).

II. Strengthening the United Nations system capacity for conflict prevention

7. The comments below pertain to the recommendations contained in the JIU report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system capacity for conflict prevention" (A/50/853). The comments by the Secretary-General and that of the Administrative Committee on Coordination[2] on the report are contained in the note by the Secretary-General of 24 June 1997 (A/52/184).

8. The issue of conflict prevention has featured prominently on the agenda of both the General Assembly and the Security-Council in recent years. In the Secretary-General's reports of 7 June 2001 (A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1) and 5 November 2002 (A/57/588-S/2002/1269) the issue received in-depth consideration by both legislative bodies and in both reports, prevention of armed conflict is considered central to the mandate of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security, underscoring the imperative for the prevention of potential conflicts from violent outbreak not only for long-term security but also as an essential prerequisite for sustainable development. Since the issuance of the JIU report in 1995 (A/50/853), major developments have taken place in the area of conflict prevention and the recommendations of JIU have in many cases been implemented system-wide. Those developments are discussed in detail below under each recommendation.

Recommendation 1

Within the context of strengthening the functions of the main organs of the United Nations in conflict prevention, the General Assembly may wish to consider such ideas as:

(a) Identifying practical ways and means of involving the General Assembly in preventive diplomacy;

(b) Instituting regular meetings of the Security Council to review conflict-prone situations;

(c) Determining how the Economic and Social Council might contribute to better anticipation of economic and social problems likely to result in a crisis and develop strategies to deal with economic and social causes of conflicts;

(d) Creating an ad hoc working group or a small committee on conflict prevention, composed of members of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, in order to facilitate handling of potential crises in a comprehensive manner; and

(e) Using the International Court of Justice in the peaceful settlement of disputes, including the so-called "chambers" jurisdiction or informal mediation by the Court.

9. In his report on the prevention of armed conflict of 7 June 2001 (A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General proposed measures similar to those listed in the above recommendation. For instance, in relation to subparagraph (a) above, the Secretary-General proposed in his recommendations 1 and 2 that the General Assembly consider a more active use of its powers, in accordance with Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter of the United Nations, in the prevention of armed conflict and consider ways of enhancing its interaction with the Security Council on conflict prevention, in particular in developing long-term conflict prevention and peace-building strategies. In relation to subparagraph (b), the Secretary-General proposed in his recommendation 3 that the Security Council consider innovative mechanisms, such as establishing a subsidiary organ, an ad hoc informal working group or other informal technical arrangements to discuss prevention cases on a continuing basis. In relation to subparagraph (c) the Secretary-General proposed in his recommendation 4 that a future high-level segment of the annual substantive session of the Economic and Social Council be devoted to the question of addressing the root causes of conflict and the role of development in promoting long-term conflict prevention. In relation to subparagraph (d), the Secretary-General proposed in his recommendations 5 and 6 that Member States resort to the International Court of Justice earlier and more often to settle their disputes in a peaceful manner and to promote the rule of law in international relations and that Member States accept the general jurisdiction of the Court. On 3 July 2003, the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/337, on the prevention of armed conflict, which deals with most aspects of the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit.

Recommendation 2

Member States may wish to consider attaching a higher priority to preventive diplomacy and allocating increased resources to this function, inter alia, through shifting resources from low-priority areas.

10. The Secretary-General concurs with the recommendation and has voiced similar sentiments in his two reports (A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1 and A/57/588-S/2002/1269). He has indicated that conflict prevention is one of the primary obligations of Member States as set forth in the Charter and that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rests with national Governments. Since 1997, conflict prevention has become a more important topical issue within the United Nations system and among Member States. The Security Council debated the issue in 1998, 1999 and after the issuance of the Secretary-General's 2002 report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/57/588-S/2002/1269). Statements have been made by the President of the Council (S/PRST/1999/34 and S/PRST/2000/25) and the Council has passed a resolution on the prevention of armed conflict (1366 (2001)). The General Assembly has also discussed the matter very intensively since the issuance of the Secretary-General's reports and has adopted resolution 55/281 in that connection.

11. In his 2001 report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General also noted that the Secretariat has no specialized staff in the regional divisions of the Department of Political Affairs or other units mandated to focus on conflict prevention activities on a full-time basis. As the culture of prevention gradually becomes more accepted, it is essential that the Secretariat be given an effective capacity for conflict prevention, including the

capacity to analyse systematically successful and unsuccessful preventive efforts and to apply them to the design of future prevention strategies. The question of additional resources for such activities is also being discussed by the General Assembly.

Recommendation 3

To provide for a more sharpened focus on preventive diplomacy, and more effective fulfilment by the Department of Political Affairs of the relevant tasks, and subject to the increase in the Department's resources as suggested in recommendation 2 above, the Secretary-General may wish to undertake the necessary structural refinement of the Department, including, as an option, the setting up of a specific conflict prevention unit, as appropriate. Major functions of the Department of Political Affairs thus strengthened in the area of preventive diplomacy would be:

(a) Carrying out an action-oriented analysis of situations that could possibly degrade into conflict by consolidating internal and external information;

(b) Proposing to the Secretary-General appropriate actions with a streamlined channel of communication (access) to facilitate early action;

(c) Assisting the Secretary-General in carrying out preventive diplomacy actions (such as fact-finding, mediation and good offices missions) decided by him and/or mandated by the Security Council;

(d) Providing secretariat services to the Security Council on preventive diplomacy issues; and

(e) Serving as a "core" for small field missions, if and when necessary.

12. The thrust of JIU recommendation 3 has been noted. However, the Department of Political Affairs has not established a specific conflict prevention unit as proposed. In 1998, the Department set up the Policy Planning Unit, which has been responsible for the coordination of a number of activities referred to in the recommendation by working closely with other departments, offices and United Nations agencies, inter alia, in the area of conflict prevention. In 1998, the Department also established a specialized Conflict Prevention Team, which meets once a month and provides an intra-departmental forum for the development of prevention action options.

Recommendation 4

As a supplement to the measures to be taken at headquarters levels, the Secretary-General may wish to consider setting up, when necessary and feasible, in the United Nations regional centres (venues of the regional commissions), small preventive diplomacy teams. These teams would assess the evolution of situations that could possibly degrade into conflicts and recommend appropriate measures to/or through the Department of Political Affairs. As necessary and in accordance with instructions from United Nations Headquarters, they would undertake appropriate actions, including establishing links with respective Governments, parties, factions and groups involved in order to defuse or head off conflicts. The teams

should be assisted by special representatives of the Secretary-General (political issues) and United Nations resident coordinators serving in countries of the respective regions (economic, social and humanitarian issues), as well as by the regional commissions and other United Nations offices as appropriate.

13. JIU recommendation 4 has been implemented in principle. Although the United Nations does not have "small preventive diplomacy teams" in United Nations regional centres, the interdepartmental Framework for Coordination was established in 1994 to strengthen planning and coordination among peacekeeping, humanitarian and political functions and it became oriented towards early warning and preventive action in 1998. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/242 of 15 September 1997, the Framework for Coordination has undergone constant development and improvement and is now becoming an important mechanism for early formulation of preventive strategies within the United Nations system.

14. Furthermore, at the country level, the United Nations country team, led by the United Nations resident coordinator and in close cooperation with Governments, participates in an interdisciplinary process to develop the common country assessment. The common country assessment analyses the national developmental situation and identifies key issues as a basis for advocacy and policy dialogue within the United Nations system. It addresses national priorities and challenges, as well as regional concerns and initiatives and leads directly to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which constitutes the framework for planning the programmes that are the elements of a coherent United Nations strategy for development assistance at the country level. The two processes allow for key risk factors and prevention issues to be taken into consideration at an early stage in the programme cycle to promote common objectives and strategies of cooperation.

Recommendation 5

The humanitarian early warning system (HEWS) of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs may constitute the core of a consolidated United Nations early warning capacity, which should be placed by the Secretary-General in the Department of Political Affairs to serve as an "analytical support and assessment system" of the preventive diplomacy activities described in recommendation 3. [It is understood that HEWS in new locations can also function for humanitarian early warning purposes, to which reference is made in a new JIU report on the involvement of the United Nations system in providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance.] After relocation of HEWS to the Department of Political Affairs, the possibility of financing the system from the regular budget should be considered, having in mind recommendation 2.

15. The issue highlighted in JIU recommendation 5 has been overtaken by two main events concerning the humanitarian early warning system (HEWS). Firstly, the increasing availability of information and analysis on the World Wide Web after 1997 has meant that the useful information collection and compilation function that HEWS originally served became redundant and was therefore subsequently terminated. Secondly, the process and mechanisms for early warning in the United Nations evolved into a system-wide collaborative approach facilitated by the interdepartmental and inter-agency Framework for Coordination, which in 2001 endorsed an early warning methodology developed in consultation with relevant

departments of the Secretariat and United Nations programmes and operational agencies. Relevant United Nations country teams are also involved in analysis and in formulating recommendations.

Recommendation 6

The Secretary-General should ensure that reporting to Headquarters on the country situation (potential/imminent problems) by the field offices of the United Nations operational agencies (United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, etc.), as well as by United Nations information centres and the field missions of United Nations departments/offices (Department of Political Affairs, Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights), is regularized and the relevant information and analysis is channelled systematically to the Department of Political Affairs. In this connection, availability of online computer facilities with compatible hardware and software as well as a standardized format of reporting would expedite the necessary processing. Furthermore, it is important to have close coordination and cooperation among departments/agencies and to come up with preliminary field-level judgements on situations in a given spot, through continuous monitoring.

16. The proposals contained in JIU recommendation 6 are still being implemented. As indicated above in response to recommendations 3 and 4 (see paras. 12-14), the Department of Political Affairs is coordinating many activities related to conflict prevention with other departments, offices and agencies of the United Nations system. This is being done through the interdepartmental Framework for Coordination and the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes.

Recommendation 7

Member States, United Nations specialized agencies, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and other sources such as academic and research institutions should also be invited to provide relevant information and analysis to the Department of Political Affairs.

17. JIU recommendation 7 has been implemented. Since 1998, several departments, programmes, funds and offices have been participating in the interdepartmental Framework for Coordination, a mechanism designed and oriented towards early warning and conflict prevention. A team of senior representatives from participating United Nations entities exchange information from their respective areas of competence and assess the potential for armed conflict, complex emergencies or other circumstances that may provide a prima facie case for United Nations involvement. Through their participation in the Framework process, desk officers of the Department of Political Affairs gain a better understanding of potential conflicts in their areas of interest. The Department's academic or research partners, such as the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum and the Conflict Prevention Initiative based at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, United States of America, offer excellent opportunities to gain wide-based analysis of specific situations of interest to the United Nations. In addition, desk officers maintain

frequent contact with Member States, regional organizations and country experts. In his report on the prevention of armed conflict, the Secretary-General urged non-governmental organizations with an interest in conflict prevention to organize an international conference of local, national and international non-governmental organizations on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with the United Nations in that field (A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1, recommendation 27). Through the efforts of a number of civil society partners, a global conference of non-governmental organizations is tentatively scheduled to take place in early 2005.

Recommendation 8

The notion of preventive (pre-conflict) peace-building/"preventive development" must be clearly and fully integrated/incorporated into the substantive as well as operational programmes of the United Nations system as a complement to preventive diplomacy. In this context, the organizations of the United Nations system, individually and collectively, should review existing policies, programmes and programming processes and sharpen the focus on alleviating root causes of conflicts. Special attention should be paid to building indigenous capacity (including the capacity of women and youth) for problem-solving/conflict prevention through enhancement of training programmes in these areas. This could include not only establishment of training/conflict resolution centres at the national and local levels to provide training grounds, but also development of conflict prevention mechanisms by launching, for example, a global pilot project on conflict prevention by drawing a wide participation of women and youth in the peace agenda. Furthermore, within the context of capacity-building, specific sectors should be targeted, which would include judicial and legal structures, institutions and instruments aimed at the protection of minorities and minority cultures, and public service broadcasting.

18. In keeping with the spirit of JIU recommendation 8 and General Assembly resolution 55/281 of 1 August 2001, the Secretary-General requested 42 organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to inform him of the actions taken and/or contemplated by them to implement the recommendations and proposals contained in his report on the prevention of armed conflict. The Secretary-General subsequently submitted a report to the General Assembly (A/57/588/-S/2002/1269) containing the responses received from various entities of the United Nations system. The common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes discussed above also respond to the concerns raised by recommendation 8.

Recommendation 9

The governing bodies of the United Nations system, particularly those of development agencies, may wish to consider strengthening their respective organizations' programmes and activities addressing root causes of conflicts, thus enhancing the role of these organizations in conflict prevention.

19. Further to the update provided in response to JIU recommendation 8, in September 1998 the United Nations System Staff College inaugurated a project on early warning and preventive measures, which is aimed at building the capacity of

United Nations staff and its partners through training in conflict prevention skills. The training project is still providing regular training for all the staff of the United Nations system, both at Headquarters and in the field. So far over 1,000 United Nations staff worldwide have been trained.

Recommendation 10

Inventories, case-studies and evaluation reports on conflict prevention policies, programmes and projects should be prepared and lessons/success stories be synthesized and disseminated, as appropriate and upon request, to programme countries, donor agencies, United Nations system organizations, regional organizations, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, parliamentary groups, academic institutions for effective utilization and feedback.

20. In his report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General called on Member States to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat to systematically analyse successful and unsuccessful preventive efforts and apply them to the design of the future prevention strategies. Although the General Assembly has not yet responded to this recommendation, some initiatives within the United Nations system have been taken towards its implementation.

21. The newly formed Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) undertakes both regional and country-level projects to develop capacity through its global knowledge network and by sharing experience, lessons learned and best practices and by timely exchange of information. The Bureau has also carried out a review of UNDP programmes with a view to documenting and analysing lessons learned and best practices in integrating conflict prevention into development assistance activities. In 2001, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations set up its Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, which is responsible for coordination and evaluation of experience and the lessons learned from United Nations peacekeeping operations. In addition, civil society and academic institutions have also been active. For example, the International Peace Academy has undertaken a cross-cutting project on conflict prevention in collaboration with the Secretariat to help shape policy and action within the United Nations system. Furthermore, the European Centre for Conflict Prevention implements a programme aimed at recording, describing and analysing prevention and peace-building efforts in the main violent conflicts in the world, with a primary focus on civil society actors.

Recommendation 11

In order to enhance United Nations system activities addressing root causes of conflict, the United Nations and specialized agencies should more extensively use the United Nations Volunteers and experienced national officers.

22. JIU recommendation 11 has been implemented to a large extent. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) have contributed extensively to United Nations activities in addressing root causes of conflict. UNV provides technical cooperation to Governments and supports community-based initiatives in key areas of poverty reduction and governance. In addition, UNV provides expertise in support of humanitarian relief and rehabilitation, advocacy in favour of human rights, electoral assistance and peacekeeping, peace-building and recovery activities. Volunteers

contribute to more cohesive societies by building trust and reciprocity among citizens and serve the causes of peace and development by enhancing opportunities for participation by all people. Since 1971, some 30,000 volunteers have served in about 140 countries, with over 40 per cent currently working in Africa.

Recommendation 12

The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, should initiate and take the lead in inter-agency discussions on the subject of conflict prevention, to enhance and promote the relevant activities of the United Nations system and coordination thereof.

23. JIU recommendation 12 has been implemented. CEB[2] discussed the theme of the prevention of armed conflict at its meeting of 8 November 2002. The Board's High-Level Committee on Programmes also addressed conflict prevention at two subsequent meetings, in 2002 and 2003, and affirmed that it remained a priority item in its work programme.

Recommendation 13

At the field level, existing programming procedures such as the "country strategy note" could be actively utilized both as a mechanism to identify critical problems, including the degree of a country's vulnerability to potential crisis in a medium- to long-term perspective and as a frame of reference for system-wide coordination and cooperation in addressing problems identified.

24. The United Nations Development Group initiated a joint process aimed at integrating conflict prevention in country analysis and programming through the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework, with all members of the Development Group participating in the process. A technical guidance note to all resident coordinators has been drafted, offering technical advice to all operational agencies in the field and to development actors in particular on how best they can introduce a conflict perspective in their analysis of the country development situation by identifying more systematically structural risk factors that impede development and could lead to conflict. The Development Group has also developed measures and strategies that could counteract that risk. Particular attention has been paid to building national capacity for conflict prevention.

Recommendation 14

Closer collaboration between development agencies and humanitarian as well as human rights agencies should be ensured both at the field and at the headquarters level, in order to coordinate activities (programmes) and to optimize the use of the resources available to them.

25. The responses to recommendations 3 and 4 above (paras. 12-14) are also relevant here.

Recommendation 15

To enhance concerted action of the global community — which is an essential requirement to ensure effectiveness of preventive efforts at the international, regional, national and local levels — the United Nations should act as a centre and catalyst of joint efforts, to cultivate an effective division of labour

between all the actors involved (specialized agencies, regional organizations, national institutions, non-governmental organizations, as well as parliamentary groups, academic institutions, etc.), taking into account their knowledge, experiences, potentiality and comparative advantages.

26. As is shown in the Secretary-General's 2001 report on the prevention of armed conflict, the United Nations has indeed become "a centre and catalyst of joint efforts". In addition to elucidating 10 principles that should guide the future approach of the United Nations to conflict prevention, the Secretary-General made 29 recommendations aimed at reinvigorating the Organization's existing efforts and system-wide coordination but also at encouraging civil society, the private sector and regional organizations to make a contribution in that field. Conflict prevention was also a theme of the high-level regional organizations meeting convened by the Secretary-General in July 1998 and has also been discussed at subsequent high-level and working-level meetings.

III. Sharing responsibilities in peacekeeping: the United Nations and regional organizations

27. The JIU report entitled "Sharing responsibilities in peacekeeping: the United Nations and regional organizations" (A/50/571) and the note of the Secretary-General (A/50/571/Add.1) were submitted to the General Assembly under the item entitled "Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects", under which the report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/51/130 and Corr.1) and the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/53/676) were also considered. In the Assembly's subsequent resolution (resolution 51/136 of 13 December 1996), there was no direct mention of the findings and recommendations contained in the JIU report. Since that time, however, considerable progress has been made and specific steps have been taken towards the practical implementation of cooperation between regional and subregional organizations and the United Nations.

28. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has continued its exchange of views with several regional arrangements in order to identify areas of possible cooperation in peacekeeping. The Department remains prepared to continue its cooperation with regional organizations in such areas as exchange of information, establishing standards for and assisting in the conduct of peacekeeping training, sharing experience in other peace-related activities and facilitating contacts with those Member States which can provide support in enhancing peacekeeping capacity.

29. The Secretary-General remains of the view that the challenges that exist cannot be met by overarching, large-scale solutions. However, a general policy directive would be a useful tool for the Department. It should be noted that great effort has been made and results have been achieved in that regard. The Department has moved towards greater cooperation and synchronization with several regional organizations with regard to conflict and crisis management. For example, the Department has signed a framework agreement on cooperation in conflict and crisis management with the European Union. The Department continues to pursue closer cooperation with Member States and regional organizations in order to explore ways to identify adequate modalities for cooperation. At the same time, it will continue to use existing cooperative relationships with regional partners.

Recommendation 1

(a) To prepare and present for consideration by the General Assembly a comprehensive strategic programme of cooperation with regional organizations in peacekeeping and other peace-related activities;

(b) In order to coordinate the practical implementation of such a programme, a small unit with a clearing house function should be established to serve as a focal point to deal with and respond to queries of Member States and regional organizations;

(c) The three departments directly involved in peacekeeping (Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Political Affairs, Department of Humanitarian Affairs) should develop mechanisms, for example, a project team for each conflict area, in order to increase interaction at the working level with regional organizations;

(d) The United Nations development system in general, and humanitarian organizations in particular, should be encouraged by their respective governing bodies to contribute to promoting and strengthening national policies and structures of peaceful governance as an indispensable adjunct to regional arrangements for peace and security.

30. The comments of the Secretary-General contained in his note of 8 July 1996 (A/50/571/Add.1) remain valid. Generally, agreed upon principles should be and are being developed, but the preferred method for coordination should reflect the specific needs of a given situation and the complex nature of peacekeeping today. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations responded to the task of identifying modalities for cooperation by publishing "Suggested principles and mechanisms for cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations/arrangements in a peacekeeping environment" in March 1999. In the meantime, much progress has been achieved in improving cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in peacekeeping.

31. With regard to the issue of establishment of a unit with a clearing house function, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has appointed focal points and has made specific efforts to develop interaction and cooperation with the regional organizations concerned. The other mechanisms suggested have been established. In that regard, it should be noted by way of example that a United Nations interdepartmental task force has been created to respond to the request from the African Union for assistance in developing and rendering operational the peace and security capacity of the Union. In that connection, the Department and other relevant departments have sent experts to African Union headquarters to provide technical advice.

Recommendation 2

(a) Conclusion of bilateral framework agreements between the United Nations and regional organizations concerning practical aspects of peacekeeping and other peace-related activities;

(b) Creation of a mechanism for cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

32. The thrust of the Secretary-General's response contained in his note of 8 July 1996 (A/50/571/Add.1) remains valid and the development of such framework

agreements could become an exercise in abstraction. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is currently considering ways of further developing relations with regional partners without compromising the flexibility required to make the relationships effective. With regard to the periodicity of meetings, the Department has found it more constructive to maintain a flexible approach and to meet when necessary.

33. Some more recent developments worth mentioning include new and ongoing initiatives implemented with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. These constitute an integral aspect of the work of United Nations peacekeeping operations, for example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Western Sahara and Côte d'Ivoire. In coordination with the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations also supports initiatives of the Economic Community of West African States in Côte d'Ivoire, initiatives of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in the Sudan and regional initiative efforts in Burundi. In Europe, the integral four-pillar structure of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo continues to offer an unprecedented model of coordination with regional organizations, including the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Recommendation 3

Special representatives of the Secretary-General should be given responsibility for overall coordination of peacekeeping operations with the participation of regional organizations.

34. The comments of the Secretary-General contained in his note of 8 July 1996 (A/50/571/Add.1) remain valid.

Recommendation 4

(a) Eligibility for receiving United Nations training and advisory services related to peacekeeping should be extended to regional organizations;

(b) The United Nations training facilities, such as the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization in Turin, should be utilized for these purposes;

(c) The General Assembly may wish to encourage Member States and regional organizations to put their facilities and human resources for standardized training at the disposal of the United Nations, other regional organizations and Member States.

35. Owing to limited capacity as regards personnel and finances, assistance in this area continues to be offered on a case-by-case basis. Nevertheless, important progress has been achieved in developing good working relationships with regional organizations and arrangements regarding training and advisory capacity. In addition to focal points handling advisory capacity, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in a joint effort with Member States and regional entities, has developed standardized United Nations training guidelines to enhance their preparedness to participate with military capability in United Nations peace operations.

Recommendation 5

The General Assembly may wish to recommend the establishment of:

(a) Voluntary trust funds in regional organizations for their peacekeeping operations and other related activities and way wish to call upon Member States, as well as non-governmental and private organizations and individuals, to make contributions to such funds;

(b) An emergency revolving fund to finance regional organizations' activities in maintaining peace and security;

(c) A trust fund to finance United Nations training programmes for peacekeeping and other peace-related activities.

36. Efforts have been undertaken on related issues. By way of example, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations organized a conference on the theme "Partners in peacekeeping: logistics support issues of the United Nations and troop-contributing countries" in Freetown in March 2003. The focus of the conference was the logistical relationship between the Department and troop-contributing countries and, specifically, ways to improve the operational readiness of troop contingents in the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and other future peacekeeping missions. It provided the United Nations and its regional partners with an opportunity to take stock of the evolving relationship between troop-contributing countries, strategic partners and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in supporting peacekeeping operations in Africa. The Department is currently engaged in follow-up to the conference and the next meeting was due to take place in June 2003 in New York.

IV. Travel in the United Nations: issues of efficiency and cost savings

37. The comments below pertain to the recommendations contained in the JIU report entitled "Travel in the United Nations: issues of efficiency and cost savings" (A/50/692). The comments of the Secretary-General and the Administrative Committee on Coordination[2] were transmitted in his notes of 9 September 1996 (A/50/692/Add.1 and 2, respectively). In its decision 51/465, the General Assembly took note of the JIU report, as well as the comments of the Secretary-General and of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, and requested the International Civil Service Commission to review, at the earliest opportunity, taking into account the relevant reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Unit, the question of travel entitlements of staff of the United Nations common system and to report thereon to the Assembly.

Recommendation 1 (para. 1)

That the Secretary-General:

1. Determine clearly functions, powers and responsibilities of relevant offices of the United Nations Secretariat dealing with travel, including a lead office with primary responsibilities (preferably the Office of Conference and Common Services), which would also ensure Secretariat-wide coordination of all travel activities.

38. The recommendation has been successfully implemented.

Recommendation 1 (paras. 2 and 3)

That the Secretary-General:

2. Review, at Headquarters and all major duty stations levels, functions of travel units aimed at their reorientation from current implementation of travel rules and regulations towards market-oriented functions of monitoring and analysing the travel market and taking advantage of emerging opportunities.

3. Reconsider the present arrangement of mandatory pre-auditing by the travel units of all travel authorizations. The search for least costly fares applicable should become a shared responsibility of travel agencies and programme managers, subject to verification and random checks by travel units.

39. While the Secretary-General has accepted and implemented paragraph 2 of the recommendation, for the reasons indicated in paragraph 12 of his note (A/50/692/Add.1), paragraph 3 of the recommendation could not be implemented.

Recommendation 1 (para. 4)

That the Secretary-General:

4. Establish at Headquarters and at major duty stations, an advisory committee on travel with the participation of all offices directly concerned, to deal with the implementation of United Nations travel policy and to advise and support the travel units.

40. The recommendation has not been implemented for the reason indicated in paragraph 18 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/50/692/Add.1).

Recommendation 2

That the United Nations Secretariat develop a travel manual and issue it in loose-leaf form, to allow easy updating, reflecting current travel arrangements, and sufficiently detailed to regulate practical questions relating to travel entitlements.

41. Recommendation 2 was accepted by the Secretary-General and has been fully implemented as part of the Office of Human Resources Management *Handbook* and the United Nations travel web site. Implementation of the recommendation has made regulations and rules and forms available online and this has resulted in improved efficiency in operations.

Recommendation 3 (para. 1)

That the Secretary-General, with the approval of the General Assembly, if and when necessary:

1. Make programme managers directly responsible and accountable for the observance of rules and regulations on travel, in particular, for the formal and substantive control of travel. This arrangement should be without prejudice to the powers of supervision and control of central administration (Department of Administration and Management, Office of Internal Oversight Services) to check how these rules are implemented.

42. This recommendation has been accepted by the Secretary-General and has been fully implemented.

Recommendation 3 (para. 2)

That the Secretary-General, with the approval of the General Assembly, if and when necessary:

2. Establish the fungibility of travel and related expenditures (temporary assistance, consultants/experts, communication) of the regular budget, on an experimental basis and subject to thorough scrutiny, allowing programme managers flexible utilization and transfer of resources within these objects of expenditure.

43. The recommendation has not been implemented for the reason indicated in paragraph 21 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/50/692/Add.1).

Recommendation 3 (para. 3)

That the Secretary-General, with the approval of the General Assembly, if and when necessary:

3. Introduce and test incentives and motivation of programme managers and their staff to be more decisively driven by efficiency and cost-consciousness in the area of travel, including retention of a certain percentage of economized resources, treatment of records and initiatives in efficiency and savings of staff members as an important element of performance appraisal, even allowing accelerated promotion as appropriate.

44. The recommendation has not been implemented, as indicated in paragraph 22 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/50/692/Add.1).

Recommendation 4 (paras. 1 and 2)

1. That the Secretariat of the United Nations undertake a feasibility study on the use of credit cards for the purpose of travel of its staff, pending clearance of unresolved legal questions, followed by resumed negotiations with the credit card issuer that is most suitable for the United Nations.

2. That the Secretariat of the United Nations introduce computer-assisted processing of travel documents (travel authorizations and travel claims), first at Headquarters and then expanded to other duty stations. This would be one of the practical applications of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), whose release II will be operational by the end of 1995.

45. The status of implementation of the first paragraph of this recommendation is ongoing as part of the commercial payment system bidding process. The second paragraph of the recommendation has been fully implemented with the introduction of an Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) travel module, which has improved efficiency.

Recommendation 4 (para. 3)

(a) That the Secretary-General continue at all duty stations the application of the lump-sum option for home leave, education and family-visit travel;

(b) That the General Assembly request the International Civil Service Commission to analyse and report on the level of cash incentive provided to the staff under a lump-sum option, including a range of different percentage schemes in different duty stations, with a view to creating a rational and coherent system.

46. The recommendation has been accepted and fully implemented. Its implementation has resulted in an improvement in administrative efficiency.

Recommendation 5 (paras. 1 and 2)

1. That the Secretariat of the United Nations:

(a) Prepare a standard contract with a travel agency for use at all duty stations, listing basic requirements and benefits to the Organization, which could be later developed to reflect particular conditions and needs of various duty stations;

(b) Undertake a comparative review of all existing contracts with travel agencies aimed at standardization and determining how well the interests of the Organization are protected.

2. That the Secretariat of the United Nations:

(a) Review the concept and lists of so-called preferred air-carriers at various duty stations, aimed at establishing their continued relevance and benefit for the Organization;

(b) Consider the possibility of undertaking negotiations with selected major air-carriers on most-travelled routes aimed at obtaining special and additional discounts and/or upgrading in exchange for increased market share.

47. The first paragraph of the recommendation has been fully implemented which has improved awareness of available travel services. The second paragraph of the recommendation is being implemented as part of ongoing activities. Continued effective provision has facilitated cost-effective air transportation.

Recommendation 6

That the Secretary-General of the United Nations:

1. Gradually acquire teleconferencing capacity, beginning with the Office of the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

2. Provide Member States with information on present and prospective needs and feasibility of teleconferencing for the United Nations, with corresponding financial implications.

48. Recommendation 6 has been accepted by the Secretary-General and has been fully implemented. Implementation has improved communications and cost savings as a result of travel avoidance.

Recommendation 7 (para. 1)

(a) That the General Assembly review the formula for determining applicable airfares, in particular the requirement of the most direct and shortest route, in order to ascertain, in the light of current developments and pricing policies of airlines, its continued relevance and impact on cost-effectiveness of air travel;

(b) That, further to an earlier recommendation, the Secretariat of the United Nations encourage the involvement of all substantive and servicing departments in the most economical and efficient use of travel funds, inter alia, through providing them with access to online airline schedules and information.

49. The recommendations have not been implemented for the reasons indicated in paragraphs 34 and 35 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/50/692/Add.1).

Recommendation 7 (para. 2)

(a) That the General Assembly review, in the light of the actual situation, the rationale of maintaining as a criterion of business class accommodation by air, the 9-hour flight duration and address the possibility of raising it to 10 hours;

(b) That the Secretary-General, when exercising his discretionary powers of granting business class accommodation by air, give more consideration to cases where, on account of age and health, comfort of travel and ability to work at destination of some travellers might be adversely affected by the impact of changes contemplated in this report.

50. The recommendation has been fully implemented. Implementation of the first paragraph has facilitated the confirmation of current travel policy and that of paragraph (b) has resulted in a further reduction in the number of exceptions to standards of accommodation.

Recommendation 7 (paras. 3-5)

3. That the General Assembly, when reviewing the reporting on granting exceptions to allow first and business class air transportation, consider preparation of these reports on a biennial basis and of one full version only.

4. That the General Assembly abolish or considerably modify the present entitlement to official stopovers en route and instead entitle travellers to more rest-time at destination.

5. That the Secretariat of the United Nations:

(a) Advise and encourage travellers to use means of transportation other than air such as railways, whenever it is cost-effective or otherwise beneficial;

(b) Ensure that travel agencies working for the Organization do not levy service charges on arranging transportation by means other than air on United Nations travellers.

51. The above recommendations were all accepted by the Secretary-General and have been fully implemented, resulting in an increase in efficiency as a result of a reduction in reporting requirements and more efficient use of resources. However, the implementation of paragraph 4 of recommendation 7 has had a minimal impact on travel expenditures.

Recommendation 8 (paras. 1-4)

1. The present system of daily subsistence allowance should be maintained until such time as the operation of the expense-based system proves to be cost effective. The General Assembly might request information on the financial and administrative implications of the introduction of an expense-based system.

2. Payment of additional allowance over and above daily subsistence allowance should not be automatic, but at the request of travellers.

3. That the Secretariat of the United Nations:

(a) Compile local directories of hotels, indicating applicable United Nations rates, and make them available to all interested travellers;

(b) Take action aimed at obtaining exemption of United Nations travellers from hotel taxes.

4. Payment of actual terminal expenses should be made on request from travellers and claimed up to the existing limit.

52. The recommendations were noted by the Secretary-General, but only some aspects have been implemented. The implementation of paragraph 3 (a) has resulted in more efficient use of travel resources.

Recommendation 8 (para. 5 (a))

(a) That the Secretariat of the United Nations:

(i) Enforce the existing rules with regard to deductions in the case of free services provided to travellers;

(ii) Revise the travel authorization form and travel claim form to reflect the existing rules on free service deductions.

53. The recommendation was accepted by the Secretary-General and has been implemented as described in the already existing practice and procedures.

Recommendation 8 (para. 5 (b))

(b) That the Secretariat of the United Nations:

(i) Remind United Nations travellers that benefits accruing out of travel paid by the Organization belong to it;

(ii) Advise and encourage all United Nations travellers, in particular staff members, to apply and collect benefits of frequent-flyer programmes for organizational use;

(iii) Re-establish, facilitate and encourage the practice, on a voluntary basis, of financing some air transportation through the use

of accumulated miles of frequent-flyer programmes for organizational use;

(iv) Provide the General Assembly with relevant information and assessment of cost benefits of collecting from travellers and centrally administering mileage banks of frequent-flyer programmes.

54. With the exception of paragraph 5 (b) (iii) and (iv) of recommendations 8, the recommendations were generally accepted and have been implemented. The units concerned have not seen a measurable impact on travel expenditures.

Recommendation 9 (para. 1)

1. That the General Assembly call upon Member States that are also members of the organizations in the United Nations system to undertake a review of travel standards and practices existing in those organizations, which, in particular, would evaluate them with the aim of achieving uniformity and consistency of such practices system-wide.

55. The Secretary-General has accepted this recommendation and it has been fully implemented.

Recommendation 9 (para. 2)

2. That the Secretariat of the United Nations encourage and facilitate working relations and exchange of information among travel managers of the organizations in the United Nations system, aimed at cost savings and gains in efficiency of travel.

56. The Secretary-General has accepted this recommendation and implementation of it has increased coordination on travel-related issues in the common system.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 34* (A/52/34).

[2] In Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/321, the Council agreed to the change of name of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), without change in its mandate.